

Fall 2015

## Brazen (Fall 2015)

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# bra.zen

## fall 2015

### CO-OPTED FROM THEIR CREATION:

#### BLACK WOMEN AND THE #BLACKLIVES MATTER MOVEMENT

by Lia Joseph '17



#### I. Issue

The #Blacklivesmatter hashtag was created by a group of Black women: Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, and Alicia Garza after the 2012 acquittal of George Zimmerman. All of the creators recognized the increasing need for a movement based on the stifling amount of anti-Black, anti-systematic messages shared on numerous social media platforms habitually blaming the individual rather than acknowledging the actual issues. The #Blacklivesmatter movement became more populous within social media culture in 2014 after the death of Michael Brown. This was recognizably the first time that people actually used the hashtag in a way that caught on and garnered the attention that it needed. Over the course of Fall 2014 and Spring and Summer of 2015, there has been a large but rarely talked about problem within the #Blacklivesmatter movement; not all Black lives actually matter. This is not the fault of the creators who specifically listed within the mission statement that the movement would:

"affirm the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum. It centers those that have been marginalized within Black liberation movements. It is a tactic to rebuild the Black liberation movement." (Black Lives Matter, 2015)

Even though the creators of the movement wanted it to be completely intersectional and mentioned that in numerous posts, the mission statement and numerous news interviews, the hashtag has been most beneficial for cisgender heterosexual Black males standard that comes along with being a trans or cisgender woman. As is common with a variety of Black liberation movements and Black power movements the goals and the desires of this specific group of

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# From the Director

Please join me in welcoming our new brazen co-editors, Monica Doebel '17 and Arrianna Jian-Najar '17. Monica is double majoring in Gender and Women's Studies and English. Arrianna is double majoring in Gender and Women's Studies and English, with a concentration in Multicultural US Literature. Please let Monica and Arrianna know what you would like to see in the newsletter and consider submitting your writing and artwork. We would love to see brazen reflect the wide ranging interests of our feminist community.

We are excited about several new GWS courses being offered this year (read more about them on page 13). These include African American Women's Political Activism (Thomas), Native Feminisms (Valentine), Theatre for Social Change (Nelson), and Girlhood Studies (Costa).

This year's events calendar is jam-packed, and we are especially excited to have Dr. Ruth Nicole Brown (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign) as our International Women's Day speaker. Dr. Brown's work documents, analyzes and interrogates Black girls' lived experiences as they intersect with cultural constructions of Black girlhood. Her published books include: *Black Girlhood Celebration: Toward a Hip Hop Feminist Pedagogy*, *Hear Our Truths: The Creative Potential of Black Girlhood*, *Wish to Live: The Hip-Hop Feminism Pedagogy Reader*, and *Disrupting Qualitative Inquiry: Possibilities and Tensions in Educational Research*. Make sure to save the date! March 10, 2016, 7:00pm. During the C3 Conference on October 19 we welcomed back GWS Alumnae Courtney Chenette '09, Lauren Bakst '11, and Shaneka Bynum '07. On October 26, GWS Alum Carrie Hart '06 presented the film she co-produced with Rick Dillwood entitled "QORDS Camp" about a queer-oriented summer camp for youth in North Carolina. We also hosted GWS Alum Parker Gard '05 (who currently works at Etsy) during the month of October.

I am excited about the year ahead and I invite you to learn more about the Gender and Women's Studies Program by talking with students and faculty, attending our events, and joining our Facebook group (Gender & Women's Studies at Hollins) for up-to-date notifications and thoughtful feminist community. Wishing you all a fabulous academic year!

LeeRay Costa, PhD

John P. Wheeler Professor of  
Gender & Women's Studies,  
and Anthropology

## CO-OPTED FROM THEIR CREATION (CONT.)

women are seen and ignored; their problems are not the general concern of the collective. Collectively, because of previous movements and marches we are supposed to focus on the greater good for the race because the needs of those who fall into more than one area of marginalization will be met later on. More so this is the direct effect of radical and liberal movements adopting the rules, guidelines and practices of the oppressor in order to survive. This becomes especially complex when groups become larger and in this specific space when social media is used as the platform to get across the message.



Artwork by Meera Chauhan

### II. Rule

The point of the #Blacklivesmatter movement is to provide support to the Black community as well as generate a

"network of organizations and advocates to form a national policy specifically aimed at redressing the systemic pattern of anti-black law enforcement violence in the US" (Black Lives Matter, 2015)

When addressing the systematic pattern of anti-Black violence, based on the mission statement of the #Blacklivesmatter movement, the factors that may affect all Black people within the movement must be taken into account. It is important to analyze how double and triple marginalized groups are directly affected by these problems and how to directly contribute to the movement. Black women specifically, make up about 20% of the deaths among Black people annually. There is actually not a concurrent number to include Black trans women because there is not an adequate enough study of trans lives, yet alone Black trans lives within the country. However, the data does show that the average life expectancy for a trans Black person within the United States is thirty five years old.

### III. Analysis

In the case of Black cisgender and trans women of color the violence that they suffer at the hands of law enforcement is never properly acknowledged. The lives of Black women are not included because they are not valued as much as the life of a cisgender male. Based on this observation, this shows that even within marginalized groups there are individuals that are given more priority because of traditional systems and values that marginalized societies tend to adopt from oppressive groups.

This is not the fault of anyone who created the group but more so the result of effectively erasing the governing methods of marginalized groups. Marginally

oppressed groups do not attempt collective leadership, they function under the impractical notion of American democracy that we are forced to learn. American democracy teaches the practice of powering down those who are a part of it. American democracy promotes the false notion that the vote of the individual makes the entire system work thus putting the blame on the individual rather than the actual system in place. Within the #Blacklivesmatter movement this is something that we clearly see happening. The way the governing principles are set up, they allow every person that is a part of social media to use the hashtag and become a part of the movement. While this is an extremely powerful tactic to make sure that there is not

one sole voice speaking for the community, one quote from any Black person who may completely disagree can be taken as speaking for the entire community. This is not to say that the individual opinion of each Black person does not matter. It is to say that each voice should be treated with the same amount of respect as the other, especially the voices of women. There needs to be a concrete acknowledgement that Black men do not speak for the voices of cis or trans Black

women and that their experiences as well as the information that they have to give to the movement should be just as valued. This

***"American democracy promotes the false notion that the vote of the individual makes the entire system work thus putting the blame on the individual rather than the actual system in place. Within the #Blacklivesmatter movement this is something that we clearly see happening."***

was one of the problems that Black women faced during the Civil Rights movement. There were plenty of women who were just as qualified if even more so than their male counterparts. After the Civil Rights movement, a variety of women who had been a part of it expressed feeling undervalued. An example would be the March on Washington of 1963. At this time there were a variety of women activists who were extremely famous but they were not invited to address the crowd, and they were forced to have their problems ignored for the collective of the Black identity as a whole. Within Black liberation and Black power movements specifically, Black cisgender men are always put at the head and given the priority. These



correlations stem from the patriarchal notion that straight men are more valuable than those with conjoined aspects of their life. The problem with collectively joining the Black experience is that people are constantly left out. Even though this hashtag and movement were created for marginalized groups, they ignored them. This leads to double and triple marginalized groups forcing themselves to be a part of a movement that does not directly address them. When these issues are acknowledged, it is only because they manage to attract the attention of the patriarchal structure that exists within the Black liberation movement. Personally, I would use Derrick Bell's principle of interest-convergence to describe this common recurrence. Yes, historically and most pragmatically, the interest-convergence theory has been used to describe the interest of dominant whites against Blacks and how white groups tend to only do what is best for society when it benefits them in some way, i.e. the passing of Brown V. Board of Education. The reason I use this theory is because of the similarities that it shares with the presence of dominant Black liberation patriarchal standards and the way that the needs of women are met. Here we can clearly see the needs of Black women, both trans as well as cis, are not being met because these two groups of people have not yet managed to merge with the needs of the Black community as a whole.

#### IV. Conclusion

So how do we fix this, how do we make the lives of all Black women matter within the

movement? One step would be stealing the hashtag back and only posting about the lives of Black trans and cisgender women that are being killed. However, you would run into the problem of people claiming misandry. Another and more beneficial step would be to actually remove Black women from this specific movement and create one solely focused on their identity. Instead of grouping all marginalized groups, focus solely on the intersections that Black women (both cis and trans) within this movement experience and what they need to survive. Create organizations that put Black women at the forefront and give them the power, and when it is put out into public spaces, have the information predetermined collectively instead of taking an individualistic approach. This does mean that social media can still be used as a platform for people to share their personal stories, but these stories and experiences should be put out into a broader and more personal place than the internet.

#### Bibliography

"#BlackLivesMatter National Demands." *Black Lives Matter*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 May 2015.  
<http://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

# FACULTY NEWS

**Dr. LeeRay M. Costa's** chapter entitled "Prostitutes, Menstrual Blood, Minor-wives, and Feeding the Ducks: Learning about Gender in Thailand" was published in the book *At Home and in the Field: Ethnographic Encounters in Asia and the Pacific Islands* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2015). And her entry on "Kathoey", co-written with Andrew Matzner, was published in *The International Encyclopedia of Human Sexuality* (Wiley Blackwell, 2015). This fall she presented her paper "Teaching Love in Women's Studies" at the National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference in Milwaukee. During her sabbatical in the spring of 2015, Dr. Costa traveled to Cuba on a peace delegation with the feminist organization, CODEPINK. She also participated in a week-long Faculty Summer Session on Contemplative Pedagogy at Smith College, hosted by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society.

**Dr. Pauline Kaldas's** essay, "Scenes in a Journey Towards Poetry," was included in the anthology, *Others Will Enter the Gates: Immigrant Poets on Poetry, Influences, and Writing in America*, edited by Abayomi Animashaun and published by Black Lawrence Press, 2015. Also, her poem, "Given Sound" was set to music by the composer Trevor Weston and will be included on his upcoming CD.

**Dr. Jill Weber** was the presenter of "Perception with a Big Bang" at the Great Ideas for Teaching Speech Panel by the Eastern Communication Association (April 2015). She was the presenter of "A Woman's Work is Never Done: A Rhetorical Analysis of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 Debates" at the Gender Matters Conference (April 2015). She was a nominee for the National States Advisory Council's "Scholar of the Year Award," nominated by Brett Lunceford, Editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* (Nov 2014) for the article "Kissing for Equality and Dining for Freedom" in the *Journal of Contemporary Rhetoric* no. 3, vol. 3/4, 2013, available at <http://contemporaryrhetoric.com/archive.html>.

# ALUMNI NEWS

**Courtney Chenette '09** (GWS major, Political Science minor) is currently employed by Morris Duffy Alonso & Faley, where her work focuses on civil rights, and labor & employment litigation, and where she created a competitive internship for Hollins students. She is also on the Alumnae Internship Committee (NY).

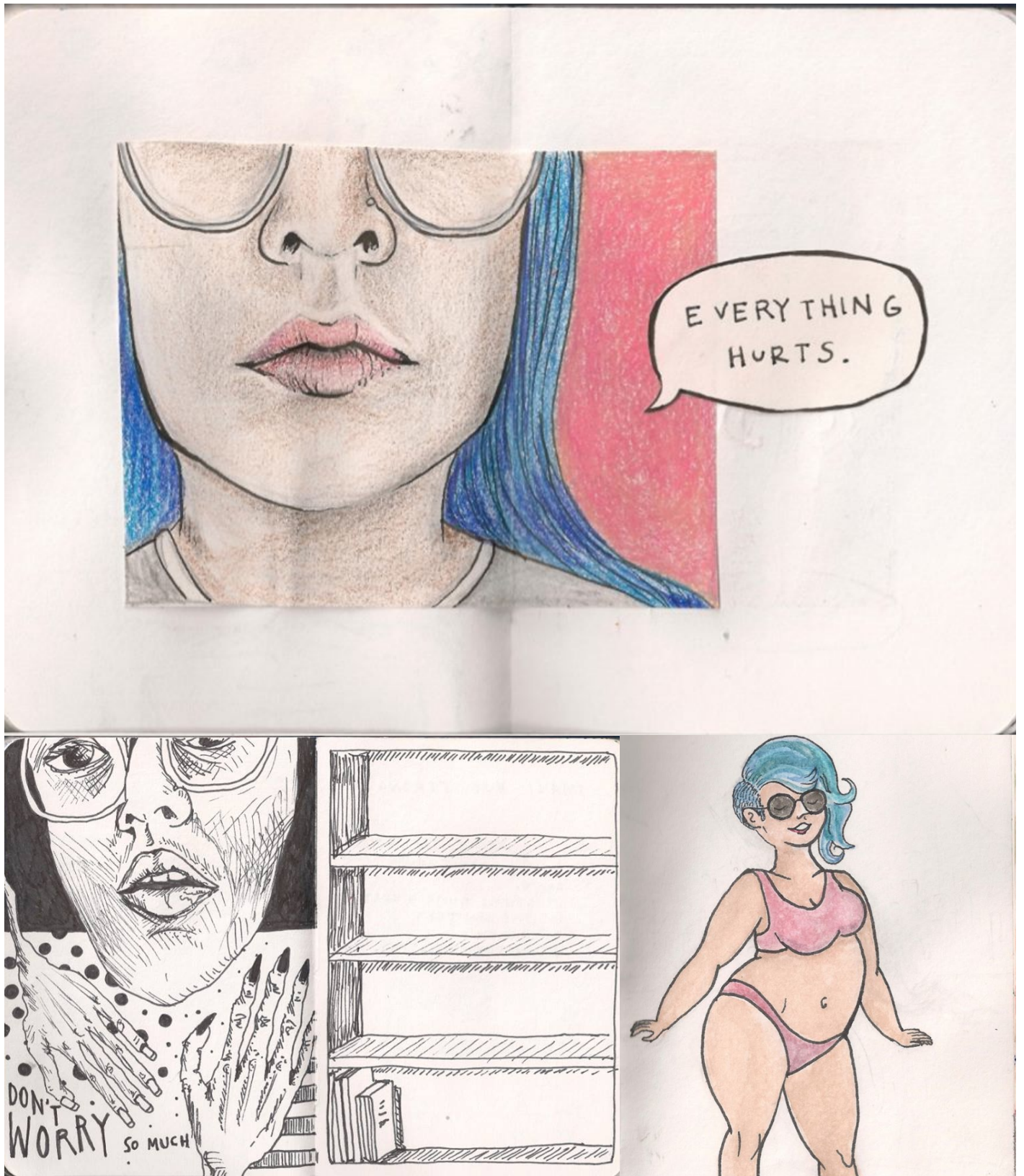
**Hilary DuBose '05** (WS major, Anthropology minor) left her position as Project Manager for the Coffee Industry Support Project for CARE International in Papua New Guinea. Hilary is currently the Head of Programs for Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Jerusalem/West Bank/Gaza.

**Georgi Fisher '04** (Interdisciplinary Major in Social Work, Social Policy & Women's Studies) is currently employed by the Bon Secours St. Francis Health System. Since graduating from Hollins she has also worked as a Correctional Social Worker for the Champaign (IL) County Jail, a Social Worker on the Forensic Team of the VCU Medical Center and an EMT for Hanover Fire and EMS. In 2015 she was recognized with the Randall Hicks Award for Excellence in Homeless Services by Homeward. The award recognizes excellence in advocacy in the field of homeless services across the state of Virginia.

**Rachel Fletcher '05** (WS major, Creative Writing and Religious Studies minors) has been a Development Associate at Planned Parenthood Health Systems based in Roanoke for the past six years. She also fundraises for health centers in Roanoke, Blacksburg, and West Virginia and is a member of PP's affiliate Foundation Committee, where she writes grants. She is completing her first novel *Oak, Broom, and Meadowsweet* working on the sequel, tentatively titled *Rhiannon*. These books are part of a fantasy trilogy that is a feminist reinterpretation of characters from ancient Welsh mythology and medieval Welsh literature.

**Candace Norton '08** (WS major, Sociology minor) graduated in May 2015 from Texas Woman's University with her Masters in Library Science. She was also inducted as a member of the Beta Phi Mu, the international library and information studies honor society.





Artwork by Meera Chauhan

# FALL EVENTS

## Date

## Events

September 8 2015  
7:30 pm

Southwest Virginia LGBT Pride

October 1 2015  
7:00 pm  
in Babcock  
Auditorium

"The Right to be Racist on Campus:  
Racist Speech, White Institutional  
Space, and the First Amendment" a  
lecture by Wendy Moore

October 5-6 2015  
8:15 pm  
in the VAC auditorium

Reading by author of "Drown," Junot  
Díaz on the 5th  
Q+A with Junot Díaz on the 6th

October 15 2015  
8:15 pm  
in the Hollins Room

Lecture by Meta DuEwa Jones on the  
intersection of race, gender, and  
sexuality in jazz tradition and its legacy

October 21 2015  
7:00 pm  
in the VAC auditorium

"Identity, Visibility, and a Voice Beyond  
the Bubble" a talk by Parker Gard ('05)  
and Lauren Bakst ('11)

October 22 2015  
6:00 pm

Lecture by Azure Antoinette, a poet,  
brand humanist, and creative

October 26 2015  
7:00 pm  
in the VAC auditorium

Screenings of *QORDS Camp* and  
*Thriving* followed by a Q & A with  
producers Carrie Hart ('06) and Rick  
Dillwood

October 29 2015  
7:00 pm  
in Talmadge Recital Hall

Performance by slam poet duo "Sister  
Outsider" (Dominique Christina and  
Denise Frohman)

November 8-10 2015  
7:30 pm  
in the upstairs studio

Performances of "The Way You Move  
Us: a gender intersection in three  
movements"

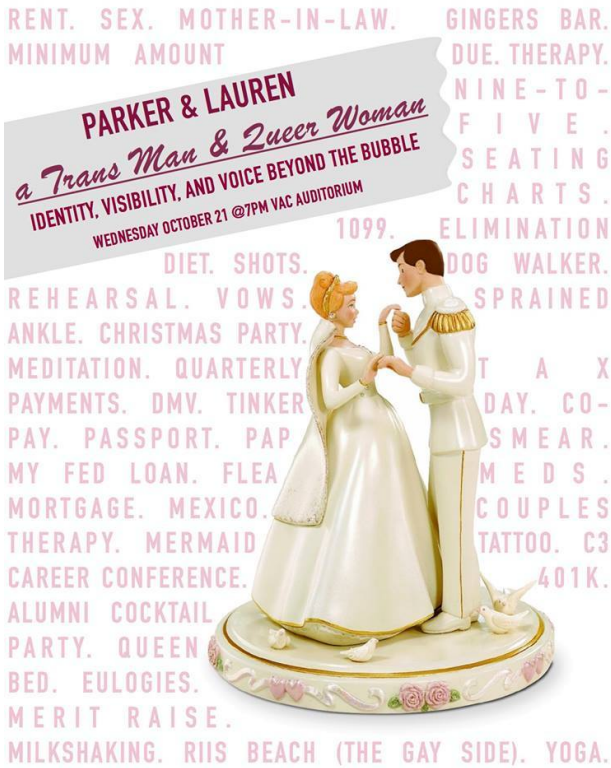
November 17 2015  
4:30-5:30 pm  
in Pleasants 306

"Why do we still need the ERA?"  
a presentation by guest speakers from  
Women-Matter.org





# FALL 2015 HIGHLIGHTS

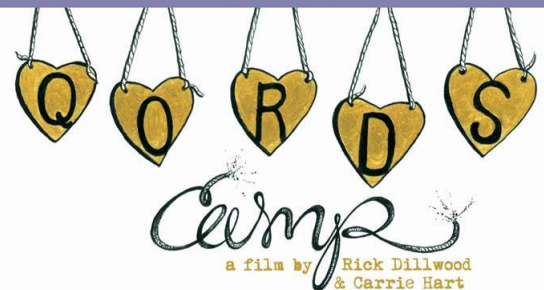


**Identity, Visibility, and a Voice Beyond the Bubble**, a talk by Parker Gard ('05) and Lauren Bakst ('11), explored the idea that manhood and womanhood are not fixed categories, and that gender is complex and evolving. Parker and Lauren reasoned that identity is an ongoing practice of revisiting your life and your self-definition, through discussions of Lauren's art and Parker's identity within the context of Hollins and other communities. The talk touched upon the contentious topic of trans inclusion and visibility at Hollins, asking difficult questions such as "How do we make space for self-actualization in a safe environment?" Parker and Lauren challenged Hollins students to evaluate the issues they are complicit in, to push themselves out of their comfort zones, and see value in the idea of spectrums rather than rigid binaries. Addressing the institutional opposition to trans students at Hollins, Parker argued that conversations must be had with trans students at Hollins and other nominally women's colleges; women's schools, he stated, are meant to create a space for marginalized genders and there is value in having multiple gender identities on campus.

**QORDS Camp** follows the campers and counselors throughout their weeklong experience at a queer-oriented summer camp in the mountains of North Carolina. Participants write and perform songs, attend workshops related to social justice issues, and engage in outdoor activities. Campers interviewed in the film express their gratitude that an accepting, positive environment has been provided to them at Qords camp, and counselors express the fulfillment that comes from providing such an environment.

**Thriving** is an installment of the webseries Keepin' It Queer, which explores manifestations of queer identity in multiple cultural contexts. "Thriving" deals specifically with the issue of violence against queer and gender-nonconforming people. The film includes interviews with several queer people who have personally experienced violence, and shows them discussing the ways they respond to that aggression, whether it be through performance art or through the reaffirmation of identity within supportive communities.

A short documentary about QORDS, a southern summer camp that builds queer community through music.



Screenings of QORDS CAMP and Thriving, followed by a Q & A with producers Carrie Hart '06 and Rick Dillwood of Wins the Race Productions



October 26 at 7 pm

Niederer Auditorium, Wetherill Visual Arts Center

HOLLINS  
UNIVERSITY

For more information, contact LeeRay Costa, lcosta@hollins.edu  
Sponsored by gender and women's studies and film

# SAVE THE DATE!

## Black Girl Genius: Thoughts on Creativity, Community Engagement, and (in)Justice.

March 10, 2016, 7:00pm, VAC Auditorium

On International Women's Day 2016 we will welcome guest speaker, Dr. Ruth Nicole Brown, Associate Professor of Gender & Women's Studies, and Education Policy, Organization and Leadership at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Dr. Brown will offer a conceptualization Black Girl Genius that allows all of us to make different sense of what we already thought we saw/knew about Black girls and Black girlhood. The specifics of this talk emerge from her practice of celebrating Black girls in Saving Our Lives Hear Our Truths (SOLHOT), a project of "civic engagement" she founded and continues to co-organize. She will also draw on more popular images and sounds to translate what we have learned locally to a broader context that will hopefully resonate with those thinking about and working with girls in Roanoke, Va.

Dr. Brown's research documents, analyzes and interrogates Black girls' lived experience as it intersects with socio-political constructions of Black girlhood. She is the visionary of SOLHOT (Saving Our Lives, Hear Our Truths), a "space" dedicated to collectively dreaming Black girlhood to creatively engage Black girl genius through the desires, experiences and memories of Black girls and those who love us. She has authored two books, *Black Girlhood Celebration: Toward A Hip Hop Feminist Pedagogy* (Peter Lang Press, 2009) and *Hear Our Truths: The Creative Potential of Black Girlhood* (Illinois Press, 2013). She has also co-edited two anthologies, *The Hip Hop Feminist Pedagogy Reader* with Chamara Jewel Kwayke (Peter Lang Press, 2012) and *Disrupting Qualitative Inquiry: Possibilities and Tensions in Educational Research* (Peter Lang, 2014) with Rozana Carducci and Candace Kubly. We are thrilled to have Dr. Ruth Nicole Brown share her research and activism with us and we hope you will join us!



# GENDER, BODIES & TECHNOLOGY: (IN)VISIBLE FUTURES

April 21-23, 2016 at the Hotel Roanoke in Roanoke, VA

Keynote addresses from **Crunk Feminist Collective** and **Michelle Murphy**

"Gender, Bodies, & Technology (GBT) is an initiative within Women's and Gender Studies at Virginia Tech that aims to creatively and intellectually explore the multiple, proliferating, and gendered dimensions of technologized bodies and embodied technologies. Through our initiative and biannual conference, we seek to demonstrate, theorize, and perform the discursive and material nodes around which gender, bodies, and technologies both cohere and fracture. We invite scholars, activists, and artists from the humanities, social and natural sciences, visual and performing arts, life sciences, disability studies, STEM fields, and queer and feminist science studies for papers, panels, workshops, new media, art, and performance pieces that explore the intersections of gender, bodies & technology in contexts ranging from virtual reality labs and engineering classrooms to grassroots movements and queer and feminist hacking spaces. How, we ask, might topics such as computer hacking, mass incarceration, or neuroscience produce new lines of inquiry when filtered through a GBT perspective?

New technologies enable us to monitor, record, and instantly upload dizzying amounts of violence committed against women and men whose

visibility—in the form of their racial or gender identity, disability, class precarity, advancing age, or sexual orientation—disrupts and threatens extant social arrangements. "(In)Visible Futures" engages this present with what Kathi Weeks has called a "tendential," rather than genealogical, trajectory, where critiques are elaborated from the perspective of the future rather than the past. With keynote addresses from Crunk Feminist Collective and Michelle Murphy, we aim for #GBT2016 to be a space of critical reflection regarding how various forms of (in)visibility render certain possibilities more and less "thinkable," and we hope to incite and propel futures in which we can actively invest and imagine ourselves."

For more information or questions please contact:

Christine Labuski/GBT Coordinator and  
Conference Director  
Women's and Gender Studies Program  
Department of Sociology  
Virginia Tech



# NEW COURSE OFFERINGS 2015-2016

**GWS/SOC 250: Native Feminisms** (Valentine) This course will explore the unique spaces and forms of feminism in indigenous communities. The principles and people who shape and practice feminism in indigenous cultures and with indigenous voices, goals, outcomes and action. In addition to indigenous groups in the United States, our course materials will be written by and about indigenous women in Canada, New Zealand, Australia, South and Central America and the Pacific Islands.

**GWS 350: Girlhood Studies** (Costa) This course will explore the interdisciplinary field of girlhood studies. We will consider the cultural representations and productions of girls and girl cultures, both academic and popular. Themes of investigation may include: gender socialization, racialization, sexuality, self-esteem, identity formation, media, consumption, empowerment, agency & activism. Discussions will be grounded in feminist intersectional approaches that investigate the diversities and commonalities of girls' experiences as well as the larger structures of power that shape girls experiences. Students will have the opportunity to learn about girls' experiences and organizations at the local, national and global levels.

**GWS/POLS 125: African American Women's Political Activism** (Thomas) This course explores African American women's political activism as a lens to transform knowledge about the American political system. How do race, gender, class and sexuality impact Black women's ability to benefit from citizenship and equal protection under the law? Topics will include Black women's grass roots activism, labor activism, feminism, protest politics, and judicial politics. Further, this course will examine how representations of Black women's bodies, sexuality, and reproductive behavior shape contemporary law and public policy.

**GWS/THEA 250: Theatre for Social Change** (Nelson) Performance and performativity are radical ways to engage with notions of self, society, and identity politics. Who are we? How do we connect to our communities? How do we change alone and together? This class will delve into these questions, pulling from the world of queer and feminist theory, philosophy, and performance aesthetics, and exploring the exciting new territories that spring up when these worlds collide. Open to first-year students.

**GWS/FILM 372: Images of Women in Film** (Gerber-Stroh) An examination of the diverse representations of women in the movies throughout film history. Students also investigate how cinematic imagery shapes perceptions and expectations of women in real life. Topics include feminist film theory, the women's movement, gender roles, identity, body politics and other issues that stem from images of women in cinema.

# UPCOMING MAJORS

## Ariel Rudy

I'm a sophomore here at Hollins and just recently declared my major in Gender and Women's Studies! I absolutely love learning about the constructions of gender and sexuality how they impact our daily lives and our global community. I'm passionate about aiding survivors of abuse and trafficking, and I hope to attend law school after my undergraduate education. Audre Lorde said, "I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own." My hope is to use my academic background in Gender and Women's Studies to advocate for and with women whose shackles are nothing like mine, but who are just as worthy of justice and liberation.



We also welcome new major **Perla Adriano-Lily** and new minor **Carly White**



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Gender and Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary program that examines how systems of oppression/ resistance and privilege operate. It is designed to provide students with an understanding of the importance of gender as a category of analysis and its intersections with race/ethnicity, class, age, sexual identity, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability.

The Gender and Women's Studies faculty members are dedicated to creating an environment that fosters critical thinking, supports student activism, and emphasizes faculty/student and peer mentoring. Students are encouraged to question conventional wisdom and to participate actively in their education. Gender and Women Studies has been an active program since 1998.

For more information visit department website at:  
<http://www.hollins.edu/academics/womenstudies/>



The views expressed by individual contributors to bra.zen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Gender and Women Studies Program or Hollins University